Horatius Flaccus (Q.) K
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THE

EPISTLE of HORACE

TO THE

PISOS,

ON THE

ART of POETRY.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE.

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PREFACE.

THE Art of Poetry of *Horace*, consisting for the most part of Criticism on the ancient *Drama*, is allowed by his best Commentators, to be the first thing of its kind that Roman Antiquity has left us. It is further remarked, that the Poet did not intend a regular and compleat treatise on his subject; but has thrown his rules and observations together in a careless manner, as more suited to the ease of *epistolary* writing.

It may seem a paradox, that any degree of beauty should accrue to a composition from a *want of order*. But the attempt of a great critic * to arrange this piece more methodically, has so far failed of improving it, as to be an additional proof, in the opinion of the best judges, of the beauty of carelesness in the original.

Such are the opinions of former critics, but a later one, Mr. *Hurd*, (now Bishop of *Worcester*) in his excellent commentary and notes upon this poem, has shewn beyond a question, that it preserves a just *unity* in the subject, and treats it with all the *method*, a *didactic* epistle requires or can admit.

* *Heinsius:*

To these I refer the curious reader, who may wish for a fuller sense of some passages than can be given (by me at least) in a translation. Should my reference introduce him to a work he was not before acquainted with, I am sure of his thanks on this account, for my publication.

The *Style* of the Art of Poetry, like that of the finished epistle to *Augustus*, is far above the *Sermoni propiora*, in which our Poet generally professes to write in this part of his works. In truth there are very few *Satires* or *Epistles* in the whole collection, in which he does not occasionally break out, as if on purpose to shew that he could be the *Heroic*, as well as the *Lyric* Poet, whenever he thought fit.

To point out any particular beauties of a work, which, in the original, is a continued series of them, would be useless and impertinent. The reader will see throughout, that NATURE, TRUE TASTE, and HORACE speak the same language: and perceive too (allowing for the difference in conduct between the ancient and present *Drama)* that the rules of this great master are equally applicable and useful to all modern Compositions of the same kind.

THE

ART OF POETRY.

Humano capiti cervicem.....

SHOU'D any painter in his wild design,
A human head and horse's neck combine;
Still more to raise and vary our surprize,
Induce a plume from every bird that flies:
Or shou'd a woman, fair as you cou'd wish
From head to waist, descend into a fish;
Cou'd you, my friends, admitted to the sight,
Suppress the rudeness of the laugh out-right?

Believe me, Pisos, such the book must seem,
Which, like the tumults of a sick man's dream,
In every object of the view shou'd fail
To give the proper head or proper tail.

" Painters and poets, with a right the same,
" To bold design have ever laid a claim."

We grant the right, and hoping to receive
The same indulgencies, the same will give;
But not admit such mad extremes as these,
That serpents perch with birds upon the trees;
Or, that the tyger lose his hungry rage,
And with the lamb in equal play engage.

A poem's grave design we often see
Give a fair promise of sublimity;
But here and there a gaudy patch-work shines
To mar the simple grandeur of the lines:
As when *Diana*'s grove, or winding stream
Through verdant vallies is the poet's theme;
Or vivid rainbow, or the rapid *Rhine*,
With bold description fill the flowing line.

Grant the descriptions elegance and grace,
Beauties they are,---but beauties out of place.

You paint in finish'd style the mournful yew,---
But with your subject what had this to do?
The sailor paid you, on a plank or oar
To paint him swimming for his life to shore.

You first design'd a grand capacious urn,---
Why dwindle, to a cup at every turn?
In short your subject, be it what it will,
Let it proceed one simple subject still.

Most of our poets, old as well as young,
By seeming right are led to judging wrong;
For neat conciseness in my style I try,
Conciseness ends in hard obscurity.
In softness next I emulate to please,
But lose all fire and energy in ease.
Bold in his flights, too lofty *this* will soar,
As much too timid, *that* will keep the shore.
Who, from one simple subject hopes to bring
A train of prodigies, as every thing;

Will paint his dolphins spouting in the woods;
His boars for acorns diving in the floods.
Even from error, it requires some art,
Without an equal error to depart.

A sculptor's genius happily prevails
As far as finishing the hair and nails:
His talents thus but equal to a part,
Lost is his labor, and despis'd his art.
Than be that genius (were I to compose)
I had rather live distinguish'd by a nose,
So frightful, as to make the people stare,
And wonder how the devil it came there,
With such good eyes, and such a head of hair!

Let those who write, assume materials fit,
And well adapted to their strength of wit.
Let them examine o'er and o'er again,
What they can bear with ease, and what will strain.
A master of his subject need not fear
An elocution just and method clear.
To bring things forward in their proper course
Of method is the beauty and the force:

Some incidents[a] shou'd instantly come in,
And some omitted, wait a future scene.
Such is the order every bard must chuse,
Who hopes to charm us with his promis'd muse.

New words with caution shou'd be us'd, and few;
Neat is the junction[b] when you make of two
Well known, a third that's apposite and new.
Your subject still may want a novel dress,
Words, not of ancient usage, to express;
And such, especially from *Grecian* source
Deriv'd with caution, will maintain their force.
What *Plautus* and *Cæcilius* ventur'd, why
To *Virgil* and to *Varius* now deny?

[a] *Ut jam nunc dicat, jam nunc debentia dici.*] Commentators are divided about the construction of this and the following line; perhaps the sense of it is simply this—That in dramatic poetry, the Author ought not to enter too minutely into detail, but just explain so much of his story as is necessary for the present, and leave the greater part to unfold itself afterwards in the course of the Drama, either by narration or to be inferred from the dialogue.

[b] *Velivolum* is the instance Mr. *Francis* gives of this junction; and very aptly, as it occurs in *Virgil*, so soon mentioned afterwards.—*Mare velivolum terrasque jacentes.*

And how shou'd I offend, if chance my muse
Some words of new invention dares to use;
When *Cato*, *Ennius*, of ancient fame,
Dar'd and enrich'd their mother tongue the same?

Words like our money,---silver, gold, or brass,
With legal stamp impress'd, will current pass.
As in the wood, the earliest of all
The leaves to bud, are earliest to fall;
So words decay, and others rise in grace
And youthful vigor to supply their place.

Ourselves to Death we owe, and all we have,
Awaits the awful summons of the grave.
The inland lake[c], that thro' the sever'd plain,
Opes its wide bosom to receive the main,
And sees imperial fleets in safety ride
From northern blasts,---a work of regal pride:
The watery fen, where late from shore to shore
The busy boatman plied the dashing oar,

[c] Alluding to stupendous works in all these kinds then carrying on at Rome and in its provinces.

That now reclaim'd, the labouring plough sustains,
And pours new plenty on the neighbouring plains:
The river, from its desolating force
Reduc'd to bounds and taught a better course;
These and all other mortal works will die!
Shall words then bloom in immortality?
Some obsolete, to honor we shall call,
And others from their present credit fall,
Shou'd custom bid,---whose universal sway
Words and the rules of speech must all obey.

Homer instructs us in what verse to sing,
Of direful war, the hero, and the king.

At first, unequal *Elegiac* Verse
In plaintive notes attended on the herse;
But soon in livelier airs began to move,
And tell the tender sentiments of love.
But who the shorter line invented, still
Remains a doubt, say critics what they will.

With keen *Iambics* first to arm the line
In self-defence, *Archilochus!* was thine.

Well are their measures suited to the stage,
In comic humour,---as in tragic rage.
In dialogue they flow with grace and ease;
Nor less in action with their spirit please;
In both the murmurs of the house appease.

To sing of Gods and Demigods,---the fame
Of victors in the fight, or chariot game;
Of youth the gallantries, of love the cares,
And jolly Bacchus in his open airs;
Fit subjects for the lofty poet's fire,
The Muse appropriates to the swelling lyre.

Unskill'd[d] in these, or ignorant to chuse,
The different casts and colours of each muse;
How empty and how impudent my claim,
To bear the honours of a poet's name!
Far better learn the sciences at once,
Than blushing, labor to conceal the dunce.

[d] The general Reader may not immediately see the necessary connexion between *Lyric* and *Dramatic* Poetry; as we have so little to do with the *Chorus* in modern Tragedy.—He will feel it in its full force and beauty by referring to the *Elfrida* and *Caractacus* of Mason; those admirable plays professedly written upon the ancient model.

The wit of comedy with easy smile,
Recoils against the solemn tragic style:
As much the rules of tragedy disdain
Narration in the careless comic vein;
Each with becoming decency and grace,
Distinct shou'd keep its true and proper place.

Yet sometimes, in the very best of plays,
The Muse of comedy her voice may raise.
A *Chremes* vex'd to see the youth undone,
In swelling phrase may chide a graceless son.
A mournful *Telephus* and *Peleus* too,
Sunk in a sad variety of woe,
Must drop awhile the lofty tragic strain,
And, to affect, in humbler notes complain.

The Drama to conduct with rule and art
Is not enough,---unless it touch the heart;
Transport th' unconscious auditor with ease,
To any place, the poet's will may please.
We laugh with those that laugh,---to those that mourn,
Responsive to their griefs, the sigh return:

The face of sorrow, cease yourself to wear,---
In vain you hope the sympathetic tear.
Thus *Telephus!* and *Peleus!*---will your woe
Affect my passions as it ought to do?
If words and feelings different tenors keep,
I laugh throughout the scene,---or fall asleep.

The mournful look becomes the mournful tale,
Anger shou'd threaten with a visage pale:
Humour preserve the arch and easy smile;
Severe the person,---grave shou'd be his style.
Lay as you will, of human fate the scene,
Nature supplies our feelings from within;
'Tis this provokes our anger or our mirth;
Or with affliction bends us to the earth:
Language she uses in the after-part,
To tell the inward motions of the heart:
An awkward dissonance in these admit,
The house will tremble with the laughing fit.

Wide is the difference the *person* lays
'Twixt what a *Davus* and a Hero says;

Betwixt the old man tottering cross the room,
And youth in all its vigor, health, and bloom.
The courtly matron's elegant discourse,
Wou'd ill become her waiting maid or nurse;
Nor less indeed the difference 't will make
Whether a merchant or a rustic speak.
To all its characters your piece shou'd give
The manners of the *state* in which they live.

Or for your plot some well known fable try,
Or, feign your own with due consistency.
Achilles, if you bring upon the stage,
Support his stern inexorable rage:
Let him deny all equity and laws,
And by his sword alone maintain his cause.
Fierce past controul, *Medea* shou'd appear;
And *Ino* wipe away the ceasless tear;
Ixion faithless; *Io* distant roam---
To tell her griefs; *Orestes* weep at home.
But if you boldly venture from your muse
New plots and characters to introduce;
Be sure from first to last your fancied piece,
In all its parts with character agrees.

'Tis difficult to pass upon the town
A subject all may challenge for your own.
The *Iliad* well adapted to the stage,
Your labors may more happily engage,
Than if you offer to the public view,
A plot your own and altogether new.

But publish'd matter is your own, with art,
If duly you sustain the poet's part;
Nor ramble, too circuitous your ring,
Minutely to encompass every thing;
And when your office is to imitate,
In servile order word for word translate:
Nor imitate so closely as to lose
Against the rules, all freedom of your muse.

Begin not like the pompous Bard of late,
THE GLORIOUS WAR I SING, AND PRIAM'S FATE.
What is his poem likely to produce,
To answer this engagement of his Muse?
The mountain groans---ridiculous to see!
A mouse creeps out---its wondrous progeny.

Far better he who never in his song
Adopts a thought, ridiculous or wrong.

" Muse! sing the man, who after sacking Troy,
" No respite from his labors cou'd enjoy;
" But launch'd a bold adventurer again,
" Saw various towns and policies of men."
He does not blaze and then in smoke expire,
But from a cloud of smoke produces fire.
Hence in his kindling song, a splendid train
Of varied wonders dignify the strain:
A king of cannibals,---a giant's cave,
Dread *Scyllas'* rock,---*Charybdis'* roaring wave.

He, shou'd he sing of *Diomed's* return,
Wou'd ne'er begin from *Meleager's* urn:
Nor in prolixity his time employ,
From *Leda's* egg to trace the fall of *Troy*:
But rushing forward, with his end in view,
Treats past events as things his reader knew,
Plac'd in the midst at once, we haste along
To the grand close of his eventful song.

Cautious all heavy dull details to shun,
He dwells on shining incidents alone:
In all his fictions masterly, and still
Combining truth and fable with such skill,
That truth or fable, let his subject be,
Beginning, end, and middle all agree,

The people and myself expect the same,
So of the poet, hear what both will claim.
Wou'd you a piece produce to please us all,
And keep the audience till the curtain fall;
Let this your principal concern engage,
Your manners to adjust to every age.

The *child*[e], who fairly talks and runs alone,
His play-mates likes of ages near his own:
Is soon provok'd, as readily forgives,
And changes humours every hour he lives.

[e] After passing his encomiums on the beautiful Episodes of *Homer;* the poet gives a specimen of his own, in this description of the different stages of human life, which must equally immortalize the name of *Horace*. For the amusement

The beardless *youth*, from custody set free,
Bold in the chace, displays his liberty:
Pliant as wax, to any vice he bends,
And for advising, quarrels with his friends:
Improvident, profuse, of tow'ring pride,
Quick to desire, as quick to throw aside.

At *manly* age another change is wrought,
Friends, wealth, and honours eagerly are sought:
Fear that a sad repentance may succeed,
Controuls with wary prudence every deed.

of the reader, I have subjoined a description of our immortal *Shakspear*, referring him to the original of the Latin poet, fairly to decide on their comparative excellencies.

——— "At first, the *infant*,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms:
And then, the whining *school-boy* with his satchel,
And shining morning-face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then, the *lover*,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eye-brow. Then, a *soldier*,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation,

Much the solicitude and care that preys
Upon the *old man* in his latter days.
Anxious to get it, fearful he shou'd waste,
Wealth gives but pleasure,---that he cannot taste:
Timid and cold in all he goes about,
Delaying, trifling, ever full of doubt,
Hard to be pleas'd, complaining, but with joy
The times extolling, when he was a boy;
And with some peevish censures of the young,
Still winding up the burthen of his song.

Even in the cannon's mouth. And then, the *justice*,
In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws, and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd *pantaloon*,
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;
His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice
Turning again towards childish treble pipes,
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is *second childishness*, and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing."

In with the tide of life much vigour flows,
And on the turn again, as much we lose:
Then never give to youth the parts of age,
Nor let the boy in manhood tread the stage:
We wait the scenes, and wait them with delight,
Where proper parts with proper age unite.

In every play, or scenes must represent,
Or narrative describe the incident.
But such our slow conceptions by the ear,
We see with greater pleasure than we hear:
What to the view in scenery is shewn,
By a transition quick, becomes our own.
But what behind the scenes is better wrought,
Shou'd never to the public view be brought:
And many are the incidents that rise
To please our hearing better than our eyes.
Let not *Medea* murder in our sight,---
Nor *Atreus* bring his hellish feast to light:
Nor *Progne* in the air her circles take,
Nor *Cadmus* hiss below a speckled snake.
Such scenes I view with odious disgust,
Nor, tho' I see them, will my senses trust.

Five acts precisely shou'd the piece contain,
Which hopes a call upon the stage again:
Neither a deity shou'd intervene
Where human aid can extricate the scene;
Nor shou'd the dialogue admit a break,
From a fourth person labouring to speak.

A manly zeal the chorus shou'd display,
And bear an actor's part throughout the play,
Nor ever aught shou'd sing the acts between,
Unsuited to the last or coming scene.
Its office this,---the worthy to defend,
Of virtue, the adviser and the friend:
Of wrath and pride the swellings to reduce,
And teach of frugal temperance the use;
To praise pure justice, and law's watchful eye,
And peace, the parent of security:
Conceal all secrets, and the Gods entreat
That pride be humbled, and the humble great.

The flute, at first, no silver binding knew,
Nor as a rival to the trumpet blew;

Simple in form, its simple notes and plain
The chorus in its parts wou'd well sustain:
Tho' light the music, it wou'd fairly fill
An house, so thin of auditors and still:
For none but rustics, frugal in their ways,
Chaste, and in numbers few, attended plays.

When *Rome* extended her imperial seat,
And, grown herself proportionably great,
More free and social kept the festive day;
Music more freely too began to play.
But how shou'd scenes and harmony more chaste,
Instruct or please a common vulgar taste?
When clown and courtier sit and hear alike,
No music can with equal rapture strike.

Hence[f], who at first perform'd a simple part,
The graceful movements added to the art:

[f] All the Commentators I had before seen, have reversed the sense of Horace here; supposing him to mean that as the Art of Music gradually advanced from its first state of rude simplicity, it degenerated: which is supposing him to advance against nature and experience, that an art is nearest its perfection at its first com-

And next, an ornament to please no less,
To graceful movements, added graceful dress.
And thus the lyre, in simple notes severe,
Encreas'd its strings, and sung in bolder air.
An equal change in poetry was wrought,
Quick elocution follow'd rapid thought;
The chorus sung in sentiments refin'd,
And with the *Delphic* prescience divin'd.

The Bard who strove in Tragedy to rise
To fame, a worthless goat the poet's prize;
Discarding tragic gravity and rage,
His naked *Satyrs* brought upon the stage.
Soon he perceiv'd a drunken lawless crew,
Well fed with relicks from the altars too,
Were only to be kept by something new.

In SATYRS, mirth and merit I admit,
Their characters agreeing with their wit;

mencement. Mr. *Hurd* has so obviously recovered the true sense and spirit of this whole passage, as to leave us in surprise, that the critics before him, could so long and so totally mistake it,

But let no Hero, God, or Demigod,
Who late the stage in royal purple trod,
From decent dignity completely fall,
And talk the language of a cobler's stall:
Nor, emulous to leave the vulgar crowd,
Catch at an empty shadow or a cloud.
As the chaste matron, ordered out of place
To join the festive dance, preserves a grace;
So tragedy, tho' blushing in the ring
Of satyrs, still with dignity may sing.

Nor, if I wrote, for satyrs shou'd my muse
The elegant or pompous diction chuse;
Nor from the tragic style so far depart,
As not to vary with the proper art.
What by a *Davus*, or a forward maid,
Cheating sly *Simo* of his gold, is said;
From what *Silenus* with his solemn nod,
Gives in his lectures to his pupil God.

Some story I wou'd take that's trite and known
And build on this, the fable of my own;

So easy it shou'd seem, that none shou'd guess
The labor great, or doubt the like success;
But to their shame, as well as to their cost,
Find on the trial all their labor lost.
So much a just arrangement will avail,
To give a merit to a well known tale.

The woodland faun, who speaks as bred in town,
To me, will speak a language not his own;
Nor let him sing in too gallant a strain,
Nor sink to phrases vulgarly obscene.
Obscene expressions ever give offence,
To men of birth, of fortune, or of sense;
Nor, though the noisy rabble loudly praise,
Will they admit them, or bestow the bays.

Not every reader will our faults perceive,
And too much license we to poets give:
For either reason, careless shall I write
In hopes of pardon, or an oversight?
Or in extreme, a rigid critic fear,
To censure and condemn, in all that hear?

Thus I elude perhaps the critic's blame,
But gain no point in merit or in fame.

Take your examples from the Grecian store;
And in your study turn them o'er and o'er.
Our ancestors the scenes of *Plautus* thought
For wit and measures, admirably wrought:
Not so shall we, if chance our ear shall please
In wit, urbanity, in numbers, ease,

Thespis[z], the first of bards, who brought in use,
Unknown before, the lofty tragic muse,
Began so humble, that a cart wou'd do
For stage, for chorus, and the actors too:
Of various characters to mark the line,
They mark'd the face with soot and lees of wine.

Next *Æschylus* personified the face
With mask and visage of more comely grace:

z Many of the first actors upoe the English stage, have begun their career of fame, from companies very little higher than are here described.

His actors mounted on an humble stage,
And taught his buskin'd hero how to rage.

To these succeeded, not without their praise,
Of far antiquity the comic lays.
But liberty extended to excess,
Provok'd a law, its license to repress.
The chorus hence, reduc'd to harmless bounds,
Sat silent and refus'd the aid of sounds.

Nothing our Roman bards have left untried,
By which a poet's name is dignified.
Bold, they have dar'd from Grecian guides to roam,
And write of actions and renown at home.
And our applause deservedly they gain,
Both in the tragic and the comic strain.
ROME for her language, were as much rever'd
As now her valour and her arms are fear'd,
Did but her poets less regret the toil,
And less reluctantly apply the file.

But you illustrious youths! contemn the muse,
That shall the labors of the file refuse:

That in retouching spends not many a day,
And blots out many a thought and line away:
Which in the hurry to conclude, shall fail
To use the last, best polish of the nail[h].

Because *Democritus* has said in part,
That happy genius wants no aid from art;
Nor will allow the man of sober sense
To *Heliconian* flights the least pretence;
Our bards now fear to shave or pare their nails,
Lest we shou'd think that sober sense prevails.
To woods and solitudes they all depart,
And at the name of public baths they start.
Wild and unshav'd, the poet's name is heard,
His fortune made, his person is rever'd;
Such is the weight of madness and a beard!

Fool! that I purge those humours every spring,
Of which uncur'd, so sweetly I shou'd sing!

[h] Alluding to the practice of Sculptors, who passed their nail over the statue, to find out the minutest unevenness in it.

No matter,---be my office like the hone,
Which gives a sharpness, tho' itself has none,
To edge and spirit other poets on:
Silent myself the recipes to give,
And put the poet in a way to live;
Open a vein of treasure to his view,
What will adorn, and what disgrace him, shew;
Direct him through the tenor of his song,
Beauties from faults to know, and right from wrong.

The rules of writing well can ne'er dispense
With its first principle and fountain, sense:
To gain it, you may study if you please,
The pure philosophy of *Socrates:*
And, but your subject clearly understand,
A just expression follows at command.

Who knows how far his duty shou'd extend
To serve his country, and oblige his friend;
What, in the due affections of his heart,
Becomes a father's,---what a brother's part;
The duties of the senate and the bar,
Of judges, and conductors of a war;

Knows with a due consistency and grace,
To give each character its proper place.

What scenes in moral life you bring to view,
Copy from nature, and you'll copy true.
The piece, tho' void of boldness and of art,
It's manners just, will often touch the heart,
And keep the auditors in more delight,
Than pompous lines of mere poetic flight.

On *Greece*, a language copious and refin'd,
Bold strength of reason, and inventive mind,
The muse bestow'd---a boon they well might claim,
Whose only avarice, was after fame.

Our *Roman* youth, of fractions taught the art,
Can split a farthing to an hundreth part.
" Take[i] from a *penny-weight* a single *grain*,
" Then, tell me boy, how many will remain?"

[i] The arithmetical terms, *Trians* and *Semis* can hardly be rendered in *English*, so as to convey the sense of them, intended here. From this difficulty, I have taken the liberty to substitute a *modern* weight for the original *Uncia*. Should the translation convey a just idea of the boy's affectation in calculating science, I believe it is the principal thing intended by my Author.

Twenty and three, at once he might have said,
But this had shewn no wondrous depth of head.
He therefore takes a scientific round,
To count how much wou'd make the grain a *pound*.
" Enough, enough," the sire in rapture cries;
" You my dear boy! can never fail to rise."
Such rust contracted, and so close confin'd
To sordid views the efforts of the mind,
What chance the liberal muse shou'd find a place?
Or sing at least with spirit or with grace?

Poets or with the labors of their muse
May entertain us, or may be of use,
Or both effects from one design produce.
Short be your precepts, that the mind may gain
It's knowledge speedily, and long retain:
The stomach loaded with superfluous store,
Recoils and sickens at the thoughts of more.

The nearer fiction with the truth agrees,
The more it's whimsical conceits will please:
But ne'er expect we take you on your word,
For facts so false or palpably absurd,

As that the boy, whom *Lamia*[k] swallow'd down,
Was seen alive again, and walking in the town.

From uninstructing scenes the aged fly,
Gay youth from those of dull morality.
Who joins th'instructive with the pleasing scene,
Of every party, every vote will win.
A work like this the *Sosii*[l] will pay;
In many a new edition, cross the sea,
And on the list of fame, prolong the author's day.

Faults and defects we see in every muse,
Which ask no great indulgence to excuse.
The lyre in skilful hands, full often strikes
The note, the master neither means nor likes:
Nor does the bow it's arrows send so true,
As never once to miss the mark in view.
Where many beauties in a poem shine,
Far, far from me to quarrel with a line,

[k] Our modern *Harlequin* entertainments afford abundant instances of these preposterous absurdities; the famous manœuvre of jumping down his own throat, comes as near as any perhaps, to the present allusion.

[l] They were eminent Bookfellers at *Rome*.

Too weak from carelessness, or, if you will,
Defective, even from a want of skill.

But as the scribe, who, told of his neglect,
Still blunders on, no favor can expect;
Or the musician, always against rule
In certain keys, excites our ridicule;
The poet so, who often fails, to me
No better than a *Chærilus* will be;
Who, if he sings with spirit here and there,
Amuses me indeed, but makes me stare.
When dulness upon good old *Homer* steals,
Revers'd my mind an indignation feels:
Yet fairly canvass'd, sure a gentle sleep
On works of such a length, without offence may creep.

In poetry as painting, some things near,
And others at a distance best appear:
This likes a deeper shade, that courts the light,
Daring the keenness of the critic's sight:
This pleas'd us once, and that, if ten times told,
Will please again, and never can be old.

O first-born offspring of a noble line!
Tho' sound discernment and strong sense be thine;

And tho' a father's care has form'd thy youth,
Still learn this maxim of acknowledg'd truth:
" Some certain studies moderate parts admit,
" And bear a mediocrity of wit:
" An age but one *Messala* may produce,---
" Inferior pleaders still may be of use:
" *Cascellius Aulus*, tho' you cannot be,---
" Your legal knowledge still may claim a fee:
" But moderate poets to pretend to fame!
" What god, what mortal will admit the claim?
" What pillar[m] bear the letters of his name?"

As grating music at the grateful feast,
Offends the taste and ear of every guest;
As musty sweets and essences displease,
Because the table wanted none of these;
So poems, born to please us to the heighth,
Descending in the least, will sink downright.

Who knows not how the martial arms to wield,
Keeps from these exercises of the field:

[m] The *columna* in the original, nearly answer to the stands or cases in which modern Booksellers exhibit their Authors to public view.

Of other games, who knows no single rule,
Avoids the ring, in fear of ridicule.
Poets alone, in injur'd reason's spite,
Still dare the muse, and persevere to write.
Why not? you say,---of honorable birth
The author, and of fair equestrian worth;
Clear of all vicious habits and their shame,
May surely offer for a poet's fame.

But YOU will nothing say, and further still,
Will nothing do, against *Minerva*'s will.
Yet with a taste and judgment so refin'd,
At last to writing shou'd you be inclin'd;
Let candid *Metius* and your father see
Th'unpublish'd piece, and shew it ev'n to me.
Safe in your desk, nine years, your work confine,
There you may alter or expunge the line;
But once abroad the word---you wish in vain,
From public notice to reclaim again.

Orpheus, interpreter and priest divine,
Of Gods above, with sweet pacific line

A rude and savage race of men reclaim'd
From brutal living, and their fierceness tam'd:
Hence fable says, that lions wou'd obey,
And the grim tygers hear their rage away.
'Tis said again, at great *Amphion*'s call,
Rose in just symmetry the *Theban* wall;
Such was the harmony, and such his skill,
The stones wou'd take their places at his will.

Poets of old were wont in solemn strain,
Public from private, sacred from prophane
To separate; to curb a lawless lust;
In wedlock join, and make the married just;
Cities to plan, and institute their laws,
And hence the poet reap'd divine applause.

Then mighty *Homer* and *Tyrtæus* came,
And fir'd the manly soul to martial fame:
The Oracles, those mysteries of heaven,
And moral laws in poetry were given:
Monarchs were courted in Pierian strain,
And verse was pastime to the wearied swain:
Then blush not, if a talent shou'd be thine,
Thus favor'd by *Apollo* and the Nine.

'Tis yet a doubt, if nature, or if art
Contribute largest to the poet's part.
To me,---deep study little will avail,
If parts and rich inventive fancy fail:
Nor will rude genius, however strong,
Without some aid from study, grace the song:
Both shou'd unite, inseparable friends,
For either to attain the poet's ends.

Who starts in hopes of bearing off the prize,
Early in life began the exercise;
To heat and cold his habit wou'd inure,
And all extremes of abstinence endure.
Who sings the *Pythic* song, has sung in fear
His voice or notes shou'd hurt a master's ear.
But now the poet cries, "Sublime! sublime!
"Hang him, who falls behind me in his rhyme;
"I scorn his place, and scorn as much to shew
"That what I never learnt, I never knew."

"Walk in," the knowing auctioneer will say,
"My goods so cheap, I almost give away."

The wealthy poet thus invites a train
Of needy flatterers to certain gain.
Alas! who can a princely dinner give,
Discharge a debt, and bid a pauper live,
But seldom has the happy gift to see
What's honest truth, and what is flattery.

Whatever, Piso! you may yet intend,
Or have already done to serve your friend;
Never, oh never, ask him to employ
The critic's talents in his fit of joy.
"Sublime! delightful! heavenly!" he will cry,
Turn pale, and weep, and dance with extacy.
As hireling mourners in a funeral shew
Will vent a louder and still louder woe,
Than those who from the soul affliction feel,
But strive their grief in silence to conceal;
The flatterer so will over-act his part,
And beat the friend who praises from his heart.

Princes by strength of wine their favorites try,
To see their humours in ebriety:
So you my friend, if e'er you write, beware
Of renard's flattery and latent snare.

To grave *Quinctilius* recite your piece,
" Correct that line; and that, Sir, if you please."
Say you have tried it o'er and o'er again,
But tried to alter or improve in vain.---
Then wou'd the critic tell you, past a doubt,
" Or work it o'er again, or blot it out."
His critical corrections still decline,
Or still defend the justness of the line;
Short he wou'd turn upon his heel, and say
" Unrivall'd sing a poet your own way."

The true and friendly critic will discard
The verse too weak, inelegant, or hard;
Too pompous ornaments will clear away,
And on the clouded passage pour the day;
The doubtful will in clearer order range,
And mark with nice distinction where to change:
An *Aristarchus* will not thus contend,
" Why for a trifle, shou'd I hurt my friend?
" No trifle, if to public ridicule,
" Such flattering praise expose him for a fool."
For who in sober sense, or proper wits,
Goes near this poet in his rhyming fits?

As safe in contact with the plague to stand,
Or take Fanatic Phrensy by the hand:
The boys indeed, give chace upon the view,
And fools incautious at his heels pursue.

Shou'd, in deep reverie, our man of rhyme,
Erecting verse so fluent and sublime,
Like fowler earnest on his game, forget
The right-on path, and fall into a pit;
Help he may call as loud as he can cry,
No one or cares, or ventures to go nigh:
Shou'd a less timid or more feeling friend,
In kind compassion, throw him a rope's end,
How shou'd he know, he fell by accident?
To tumble might be what the poet meant.
His humour it may be to end his days,
Sunk[n], and rehearsing under ground his plays.
Then, for his comfort, shou'd the tale be told
How died a fam'd *Ciçilian* bard of old,
Cooly determin'd on immortal fame,
He pitch'd head foremost into *Ætna*'s flame.

[n] I am led to this liberty in the translation, should it be thought one, from the following similarly ludicrous idea, in the fourth Satire of the first Book.

Suave locus resonat voci conclusus.——line 76.

So let all poets perish if they will,
To save, against their wishes, is to kill.
Nor is it once, our bard this trick will play;
Stop him, he'll do the same another day:
To give him good advice, is loss of breath,
He loves, and die he will, this noble death.

Whence this sad curse of writing, is unknown---
What sin, what crying trespass had he done?
In insult on his father's ashes trod?
Or rous'd by sacrilege some vengeful God?
Mad past a doubt he is---and like the bear
Confin'd, from chain and collar cou'd he tear,
The wise and fools alike he drives among,
And death to him who, captur'd, hears his song:
An arrant leech, he fastens on his food,
Nor quits the skin, till surfeited with blood.

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F I N I S.